

Vol. 3, No.2



July 2019

NormalcyMag

Exploring American Culture

**Accepting a Life
OF OUR GIFTS**

IN DEFENSE OF BOOKS

Gifts of the Road

OPPOSITE FIELD BLAST

MORE POETRIES OF PI KIELTY

LOW ADVENTURES PART 10--THE SAGA CONTINUES

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NormalcyMag

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"The Printed Flags of Buddhists Prayers "

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NormalcyMag

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*Publisher & Editor: Tim Krenz
Assistant Editor: Derek Shores
Associate Editor: J.D. Schloss
Cover Page Editor: Chris "Cree" Larson
www.normalcymag.com*

*The CEPIA Club LLC
P.O. Box 60
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Editor's Standard

Welcome back to NormalcyMag! The theme of this issue, Volume 3, Number 2, "accepting a life of our gifts," explores in the several selections a major recurring theme of this magazine—a spiritual principle of acceptance, in all its facets for choosing to live better in all ways with ourselves, and with others. In our diverse, everyday ways, what might seem hard to accept, or immensely disappointing to preconceived expectations, often later become the gifts of learning and experiencing that we must treasure. Indeed, as people we often fail to recognize the blessings when present and lament their loss long after they pass. Henceforth, let us take nothing or no one for granted, and let us accept as apparent the lives we have and the true gifts given from any source.

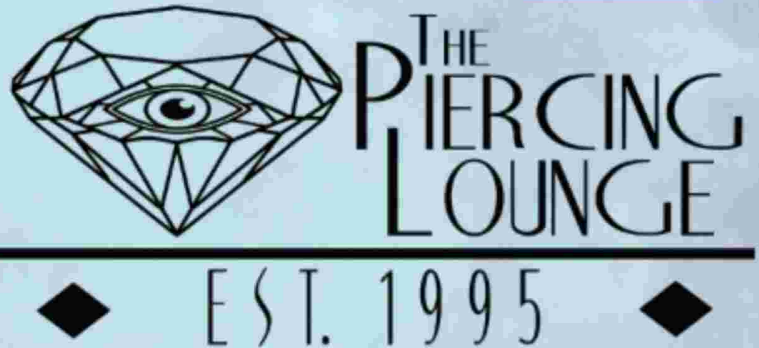
I do not know if anyone would ever consider reading this magazine a gift in their busy everyday lives. That does not concern me. While the editors and I believe it has some value, this magazine does not need to matter to others in the greater scheme of the world. I can say, for certainty beyond question, that writing for and editing and publishing this magazine with my collaborators has given me not a false

satisfaction of the final achievements (if any), but it gifts me in the forms of a goal and purpose in a very critical part of my own life. The vision that the collaborators generously share with me makes this magazine the joyous effort of my life to now.

Even so, this issue of NormalcyMag almost did not happen. It had its usual frustrations, worries, angst, and soul-searching. Unfortunately, it should have come out in late April. In those intervening months, I suffered some turmoil in my life that prevented publication until now. But as the gifts of my experiences have taught me in the past, the time would come when the plagues of life would abate and the magazine would have its own due course in time. I accepted the circumstances. I surely will benefit from them.. Time prevailed its magic, with my conscious efforts to get beyond the plague of it all. Only one concern remained: Publish this issue. Now that we have it ready, I ask reader, once again, as always: "Please, read with open mind!"

Tim Krenz

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Reflecting

Gifts of the Road

By Khaiti Hallstein

Until this year, I hadn't really appreciated how the snow releases a tidal wave of gifts each spring. Sometimes in the yard, along with garbage and odd bits, I find long-lost tools that now are not needing to be replaced, and sometimes treasures that were forgotten about. But this spring I am most excited about the gifts of the road, the death in the ditches.

When I was a little kid, my Mom named all the male baby goats born in her herd "Hamburger." She milked the momma goats and sent off the boys to be harvested for meat in the fall, because you can't milk a boy goat. There's a memory I have of a small stock trailer parked in our farmyard. It was sunny and yellow but cold so it must have been late fall, which in South Dakota means winter is about to start. My mom was pulling the stubborn teenaged boy goats by their collars up into the dark space of the trailer, and I remember her looking over at me with a sadness. Later in life she told me that she never could bring herself to eat any of the goat meat she had raised. Being too young to understand death and meat and animals, farm animals versus pets, my body grew nourished by goat meat and milk.

As a tomboy school girl, I loved finding roadkill in the tall grass around our recess playground area. Cats, dogs, racoons, fawns, sometimes even opossums with their fat almost reptilian tails. I loved leading the other kids to my decaying discoveries. We'd dare each other to poke the dead things with sticks, shrieking in horror when liquids oozed out, running when a stinky cloud began to waft. Yet, everyday we'd return to witness the disintegration of death. The body moving with a million maggots writhing around eating the insides, eyeballs sinking into the skulls, hair melting off the skin, then the bones bleaching in the sun.

The theme of my life has seemingly revolved around death. After my childhood forensic interest in dead animals, I became anti-death as I rebelled against my parents by becoming an animal rights-ey vegan teenager. The horrifying videos released by PETA were 100% effective on me. Seeing animals terrified as they faced their deaths was ample evidence for me to embrace my new plant based diet. I took the religious fervor I had been socialized into by my parents and put it onto Veganism instead, to their dismay. I was a real pain in the ass.

But, as all youngsters do, we evolve and change our perspectives when presented with new evidence. And often we end up picking up where our parents left off. I started to embrace death as a part of nature after witnessing a little Peregrine falcon dive-bomb attack, and try to take off with, an injured blue jay. The blue jay was nearly the same size as the falcon. The falcon struggled to keep the jay in it's grip and had to land several times to clutch it's talons in deeper. The blue jay kept struggling to get free yet was certain to have a traumatic death, clutched in the falcon's talons, punctured and bleeding. I thought, well, if this is just how nature works, who am I to judge what that falcon is doing as wrong, or unethical. The falcon has got to eat, and it doesn't care if the blue jay feels pain. By that logic, if we are part of nature and also predators, should we care if our food felt pain or suffering?

A few years later, my desire to become more self sufficient prompted me to think about working with animals for meat, milk and eggs. I started to believe maybe I could ethically eat meat *and* one-up the falcon, by caring about how my food lived and then ensuring it died quickly and without extended suffering. I just didn't know how to start, so I bought a pregnant milk goat. She had a boy kid, and you cannot milk boys. This is precisely why my Mom had named all her boy goat babies Hamburger. That reconnection launched me into accepting life and death together, especially when it comes to food production. I gave that little male goat a good life over the spring, summer and fall, and then a friend came over to slaughter him. I wasn't ready to participate in the slaughter, or even see it, so I left for a few hours. When I returned, my friend had left the goat skin for me in a bag. The roadkill days of my youth returned as I lifted the bag and felt the weight. I was thrilled and fascinated, but this was a much more intense experience than simply picking at roadkill. I had watched the animal whose skin I was looking at, come out of his mother 6 months previous, as a tiny baby goat. Now he was dead, and he'd had a good life and an instant death, and his flesh would be cooked and would nourish many. I didn't eat any of this goat's meat, I wasn't ready yet. I did tack his beautiful hide to my garage, flesh side out to feed the nuthatches and let the winter air dry the skin.

Next came chickens. I learned about harvesting birds with an interesting arrangement. There was a sweet older lady I met while working at the co-op. I loved finding interesting customers to talk with at my workplace, so that they could help me pass my shift more quickly. Mary Jo told me raising chickens with her family and how the whole extended family would come for the big harvesting day and they all pitched in on the gruesome task and then left with their chicken supply for the year. She lamented that the flavor of those home-raised chickens just was not there in store-bought birds, even the "natural" ones. On a bizarre whim, I said, "Let me raise some for you." I proposed they pay all the expenses and in return for my labor, they'd teach me how to slaughter and butcher chickens at the end of my raising them.

I've raised and killed hundreds of animals since I "switched sides". All the slaughtering I've done has been done with care and compassion for what I was taking from each animal. Well, actually I'd say 99% of the slaughtering was coming from a place of TLC, there were a couple of adult buck goats that I was happy to kill because they were such jerks. The goat curries I concocted from their meat tasted extra delicious, but that's not why I'm telling you this. After the buck goats were cleaned and butchered, I'd stuck the skulls of those buck goats in my compost pile. That was 7 years ago and recently I unearthed them. They are beautiful. We hung them up on my utility pole. Next the 4 Highland Cattle skulls that a couple years back I'd left on my shed roof to get cleaned up by the nuthatches, got hung pirate style, cascading down a tall tree trunk next to my driveway. My inner tomboy had started flaring up, but I didn't know what to do about it. Dead stuff, death, art, life, living...

This spring I was helping at Ben and Derek's new weirdo vintage shop in Clear Lake called Super Junk. Derek has a taxidermy pheasant head for sale there, mounted on a long wooden plaque. It's kind of old timey and homemade looking and odd, but I loved it immediately. Considering all of this history I have with death and dead things, and a desire to dive into making art, it only makes sense that I'd enter into the bizarre world of amateur taxidermy. This is what leads me to the gifts of the road.

After I saw the pheasant mount, I requested a few taxidermy books from the library and started researching and getting

excited to try this new idea out. The word Taxidermy means simply "skin arrangement." There are Rogue Taxidermists, Standard Game Taxidermists, Competitive Taxidermists, Vegan Taxidermists, and Botanical Taxidermists. I become obsessed. Where to start? How? Well, the "gifts of the road" began a few days after I started pondering all of this. I was driving over to my friend Erin's house and suddenly spotted a rather large raccoon on the side of the road. A fresh one with a head injury so there wasn't guts or blood everywhere. I popped open my hatch, picked the raccoon up by its tail and was surprised by its weight. I hoisted it up into the back of my car and resume heading to Erin's. She and I recorded our podcast episode and then when I got back home, triumphant with my raccoon, I find that my boyfriend has also found a roadkill for me! A cat! He is a bit more sensible/squeamish than I am, so he placed the dead animal on the hood of his car. Since he was less than a mile from where we live, he just drove slowly to keep the stiffened corpse in place. A minute later he drives past some people walking their dog on that same road, and can you imagine their faces when they see a dead cat on his car hood!

Death is the end of this life, that's all there is to it. It's life's greatest mystery. I like looking at death to feel alive, to be reminded that I am alive. "Life is a gift," some would say. I'd say it's also a gift to feel aware of your impending death, and all the deaths happening all the time. A gift because it takes some of the pressure of existence off, while spurring you on to do as much as you can while you can. At least for me, who knew the gifts from the road and diving into Taxidermy would provide a curious and challenging hobby, as well as yet another point of reflection on my existence.



Khaiti owns LTD Farm and lives near Clayton, WI with her boyfriend Ben. You can hear all about lady farmer life on the podcast she and Erin put out called "Two Farm Ladies," available on itunes, stitcher, soundcloud, and youtube.

Sub Terra Vita

Chronicle #56

A Gift of Books and In Their Defense

By Tim Krenz

*Master of this design, did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessaries,
Which since have steaded much; so, of his
gentleness,
Knowing I lov'd my books, he furnish'd me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.*

*"Prospero"—The Tempest—
by William Shakespeare*

I began to grow my mind at a young, pre-literate age, when I could recite the first words of my favorite book, "In a very small city near Kalamazoo." My sisters had read me that book about Tweety Bird so many times I memorized their narration. They stopped reading it to me once I would narrate along with them. From that point, from someone reading to me, I memorizing the words, and following along, I learned to read by a willful force over some odd difficulties. With that small start, that very singular opening line from a story about a cartoon bird, I built a life-long love of reading,

writing, indeed for learning, to pass my quiet time and for my life's work.

Whether writing about my life's adventures, inside and outside my mind, or between the adventures I call life, I believe my great artist friend, Dan O., said it accurately. He said I had “a thirst for knowledge.” Yet, I only partly quench that thirsty quest for a better understanding through passive reading. To fulfill the rest of my ideal, I must live actively. Either way, it all has led me to write about what I live and experience. But reading provides the foundation for me. Therefore, like all writers, I have enslaved myself to literacy. In that bond-hold, fortunately, I keep my own topics and plots fresh for new chapters and chronicles in my life.

I might never achieve the wisdom I seek while times last. I have, not surprisingly, enjoyed every word of it: written, spoken, read, or heard. From every place I have seen, and from most of the people I have met, others and their examples, their ways, their utterances, their natures, and what they do not share, have taught me lessons of immense value about our place in the bigger reality. So much exists that from ancient times to today we could only write it down to preserve the memory. In books, or other printed things, I often wonder: “What do writers leave out of their texts?”

We can fill many more volumes than ever written with what writers left out of their stories. Either way, a passion for the written and printed American language, especially, has taught me one thing about human nature: NO person, not just a writer, can ever successfully “fake genuine.” To do that would involve a witchcraft or an alchemy worthy of torture, confession, purification, and exile, no less. Here, we have the sum of basic wisdom. Let all words used have one meaning: Truth. Let all truth have but one purpose: Humanity. Let all humanity have one goal: Love. And, finally, let all love have one, single end: Peace.

Writers and readers can have no time for falsehood. We do not have that much talent or patience to waste. In growing up, with the passion for reading as the foundation and beginning of knowledge, I began to discriminate between books, types, styles, and authors. It has continued to this day.

I had several bookshelves designated as mine in the house where I spent the first eighteen-and-a-half years of my life. Although a person can stack and stow books anywhere, like on tables, in corners or boxes, or upon the floors, good books belong on shelves. I still have a bookshelf where I kept “my” World Book Encyclopedias, with more than a dozen annuals, in the far back bedroom of our old house in Osceola, Wisconsin. The shelf and those gray and green covered volumes got shifted there to near the attic entrance sometime in elementary school. I forgot why we put the them in such a cold, dusty corner of the unused part of the house. I like to think, though, that I put them there to protect their knowledge, however outdated 1960-70s encyclopedias might seem. As long as I could make space for them, I would keep them. I read those volumes and the favorite articles endlessly as a school kid. Most of that reading, on the other hand, never had anything to do with my school work. My grades suffered as a result of hours of poring over the facts and stories they revealed to me.

I kept my private bookshelf in my upstairs bedroom. In front of the southwest window, in the crook of the sloped ceiling of that cold, old farmhouse room, I had my prized childhood book collection. I had kids books, of course, like junior

geography and anthropology books. With the comic books stored in a big flour drawer in the downstairs kitchen, I saved this bookshelf for the best of my advanced, more mature tomes of history, literature, adventure, and reference books. I had a paperback copy of the journey of the raft, the Kon-Tiki. I even named my first dog "Tiki." I owned the adventures of Marco Polo, an encyclopedia of military aircraft (published by Motorbooks, Int'l, near my house), which my sisters gave me one Christmas. Another sister had given me for Christmas another year a cloth and leather Atlas of the Bible, one with great colored maps, pictures and text. I also had books I ordered from school catalogs, like the Diary of Anne Frank and Orwell's 1984. The wide shelf had three levels, and I filled them all, left to right.

I had one young adult history book that I read thoroughly in middle school. An over-sized illustrated history of the American Civil War, it had a reddish, black, blue and gray hard cover, and many drawn blue and gray pictures inside. Its sketches of the Union and Confederate flags stood out for their simplicity and dignity in solemn tribute to that war of rights and wrongs. Of all my favorite children's books growing up, I had inherited my older sister's Step Up books, with their biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, The Men Who Sailed the Seas, Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, and Lewis and Clark. Because of their large sized fonts, their simple stories, and their elegant and simple illustrations, I absolutely LOVED that particular set!

I owned quite a many advanced history books. Still young, I collected above my station of age. One, Jablonski's Pictorial History of the World War Two, I asked my mother to order for me after seeing a television commercial. I bought, with some allowance, a green-covered history of the Vietnam War. My middle school librarian even wrapped the dust jacket in a transparent cover, so it really looked like a library book, even though it lacked the catalog number on the binding. And among the most inspiring books I ever collected, somewhere on a discount shelf at a bookstore in the old Maplewood Mall in Minnesota, I picked up for a half-price whistle the autobiography of Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne. He wrote it in the early 1980s having just lost one game in each of three consecutive seasons that would have won him three college national championships. I did not know it when I first read it, but a decade later, that man's



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faith in his personal beliefs allowed him to persevere despite the disappointments. He eventually won three national college football championships and then retired to the pantheon of supreme class and attitude. That book, titled *More Than Winning*, I would remember in times of my own toils and troubles. The message truly carried me through some dark years, and a dark decade, too.

Beyond my own collection, I read many scores of books and old magazines from all the Osceola public school libraries, and from the old Osceola Public Library, located in an old house on River Street just two blocks down from Ladd Memorial Hospital. I always checked out the big person books, mostly the histories, but once in a while something like a Robert Ludlum thriller. I had ambitious tastes in reading for a young person and as a teenager. Yet, still, no other library could ever compete with my favorite library: MINE!

From middle school days, only one bookstore frequently stands out in my memory now. Often, while visiting my sister in the far reaches of southwestern North Dakota, I would spend the weeks or a month poring through my brother-in-law's rather diverse library of Americana, taxidermy, nature, history, and thriller novels. A couple of summers, my sister took me to a men's clothing store on the main street of that small, dusty Badlands town settled among the buttes around wheat fields and grazing lands. While filled with clothing for grain farmers, sheep herders, cattlemen, and coal miners, one wall of that cowboy haberdashery had a book kiosk.

One of those books I bought, a history of Ancient Rome, occupied my time the rest of the trip, between the times for putting up hay and fixing fence with my brother-in-law. That book's copper-rust colored dust jacket got slightly ripped and worn by the time I brought it home to Wisconsin. I nonetheless devoured the history of the Grachi, Marius and Sulla, Hannibal, and Scipio Africanus. Typical for me with anything I read, I found so much in that history of Romans to stimulate grand thoughts. It took years for me to realize it, but books gave me the gift to expand beyond my surroundings. Whether in fiction or non-fiction, history or adventure, tragedy or comedy, I found that my love of books brought me an expanding and unending fortune of blessings and lessons in my life. Some lessons, worse or better unsaid, I discovered the hard way. By reading, I also learned how to write, to think, to digest, and to teach. Hence, by reading I learned to share better those gifts of benefits and costs with others. Hopefully, some readers of my writings can profit by them.

Early in my senior year of high school in Osceola, my father retired from his life-long employment and my parents bought an old farm about 8 miles away. They planned a new house, and to work the land, once I graduated. Needless to say, by the time of my graduation in May 1989, the sales agreement for the old farm in Osceola awaited our move to the new place. I had enrolled in a university and would leave home. That spring and early summer became a frenzy for me. Betwixt two worlds, two houses, and a school dormitory, I had to reluctantly sort away what to keep and what to discard. Other reasons, too, put me with one foot each in two different worlds. Of course, my family had a big garage sale in our old, really big garage, that summer.

For my own part, I sold too much too cheaply—toys, comics, etc.—but just things, really. For the books? Well, only a few sold at the garage sale. I remember my gnawing sadness and doubts as Mom and I drove the old Ford truck down to the donation shed at the Catholic Church. We donated the things left over from the garage sale, to help the needy, of

course. While good stuff, we had things and memories, which we had to dispose in a better way than in the trash dumpster. My family lived in that home for twenty-eight years. I lived in it 18 and a half. Much had to go, all the detritus of modern living.

I remember, too, carrying the boxes of books to the old church shed. No one had wanted them. I could at least give those boxes as alms to the world of ideas. Perhaps some kids somewhere would have treasured those gifts of timeless reading I could provide. I, sadly, held for the last time that over-sized orange-red and black illustrated history of the American Civil War. I turned the pages, I believe, but I definitely remember looking over and feeling with thumb and forefinger the broken, frayed, fabric lining that remained of the binding. With some sense of purifying the smell of musty books, but with intense remorse, I put that book along with the boxes into the shed. Mom and I drove off. Childhood starkly ended.

In early August, I took a road trip with friends to Winnipeg. When I came home, I found I had none. In the dark and the rain, the old house sat unlit and empty. With the power off, I could not even go inside to say farewell. I drove to the new farm and within a few days I packed my car with things and drove to my new school. After checking into the dormitory, and getting my room assignment in a first floor corner, I brought my things in to start my new life, as an adult, a student, and hopefully, someday, a writer.

I brought the first boxes over to my cubicle desk, in the corner by the window. I unpacked. On the shelf above the light, I put what remained of my books that I saved. I may have rid myself of most of my young person's books—the childhood readers, the geographies, the anthropology, the adventures, the Kon-Tiki, all but a few of the young adult books—but I save the ones that would drive me forward as an adult. I also saved the Step Up collection AND my encyclopedias, both of which I left at the new farm. In my dorm room, I put up less than two dozen books—among them the World War Two pictorial history, the Vietnam book with green cover and protective jacket, the history of the ancient Romans, the military aircraft encyclopedia, the atlas of the bible, and the book by the football coach.

One of the books, purchased since my return from Winnipeg, Canada, became the cornerstone of my now rebuilt, overbuilt, and formidable library—thirty years later. I had purchased Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* for a dime at a thrift store. That singular book represented my determination to cleave to the gift that books, print, language, ideas, and my own writing, gave me to share good things, useful things with the world. Everywhere I have moved since, my library gets moved first.

Because I came close to giving up all of my books, only then did I realize that ideas and ideals of truth, humanity, love, and peace need preservation. In print, the best ideals have concrete permanence for me. And libraries became pantheons of civilization and preservation. It did not cost quite a duke's ransom to collect books, when young or now. Always, though, like Prospero, what I invest in my time to read, and the attention to my library, gives me the magic that I touch with my fingertips. And those fingertips create the lightening bolts of words to shock my ignorance into a chance at wisdom, for better, for good, and for a higher purpose. Long live the words!



Versing

Astronomy's Lament By Pi Kietly (p.h.)

If . . .

. . . Heavens would die,
 when stars do cry
a misty rivering sadness;

. . . When far, alone,
 and moons drop foam,
The worlds stop from unhappiness;

. . . A comet flies
 across no skies;
and suns beam no rays of gladness;

then. . .

. . . God would lament
 little time spent
freeing universal madness.

. . . When faith may fail
 friends, unto nails,
Rescue me away from badness.

. . . Yet time's not late.
 Those divine fates
keep creation. . .
 in hopefulness.

Wonder Pory Pslam From: *Alphabet Psalms* By Pi Kietly (p.h.)

The depths of thee, your empathy, always mark you strange.
Where you walk, you wander, and call your father's name.
The odd cloth you wear, what you do, you've always done
your same. How you talk to raptured rooms, you rebel
toward your early tomb. Then you feel around that shore,
and command a stormy sway? What makes you different,
we cannot tell, yet we feign embrace your bizarring self.
You carry them, then leave them all, for hills you roam, in
desert realms. Eating what, but clay? What heights you see?
How wise you know? Then talk of things ancient old, yet
still removed our ills away. That simple path, without silver
you trod, and show those things you pray. We wonder. It
makes you odd, but now we see, your bloody crown, hands,
and hobbled legs. We see your wondering soul. At your
grave, we saw the stone, now pushed and rolled. He saved.
Forgive us, Lord, for we thought you strange. You left the
world. We remained. We live with guilt and sinful shame.
Now we grieve our awful crime. In last, we see the Wonder.
We need you more, and once and more, as time returns. We
pray you welcome. Please, Lord, reveal more wonder. . .
come home with us and Stay.



Story

Honesty


By Isabelle Anderson

One day my sister came home with a friend. I asked, "Who's that?" She told me, "Her name is Rachel and don't tell Mom!" I swore to her that I wouldn't but little did she know, I told. When I told my mom, she freaked out and stormed into her room and yelled at Brena saying, "You're grounded!" My sister got so mad at me she tried to punch me in the face! My mom rewarded me for telling the truth. I told Brena I was sorry for telling and she said it was OK as long as I didn't do it again.

The next day she came home with Rachel again!!! They went right to her room. I told no one because I didn't want to get punched! But then as soon as Mom got home she asked if Brena brought home a friend and I said, "No." GOD, I regretted it! When I went to bed I told my mom the truth. I felt relieved! My mom got kinda mad but at least I told the truth. Brena kept coming home with Rachel! And I kept telling the truth!!! I could take the punches as long as I was telling the truth!!!

Then one day I heard Mom and Brena talking about how it was all a test for my honesty. Man, was I MAD!!! I yelled at them and they just started laughing. I thought I was going to explode!! But I didn't...

The next day I said I was sorry for getting mad. I had felt better. Brena came home again with Rachel and I asked if she asked Mom and Brena said, "Yes." When Mom got home, I asked Mom if Brena asked if Rachel could come over and Mom said, "Yes." I couldn't believe I got put through this!!!

I like being honest!! 

Isabelle Anderson, age 10, once lived and wrote in the St. Croix Valley, and in the Twin Cities, MN, and currently resides, goes to school, plays and writes in Florida. She should put procrastinating writings like the rest of us to shame!

Check Your Head List

By Davey Shoves

"Acceptance Manifesto"

Walk* in your house.

Walk* to town.

Walk* through the woods.

Walk* around a cemetery.

Walk* beside a road.

Walk* along a stream.

Walk* over a mountain.

Walk* on a dune.

(see **)

Walk* down a path.

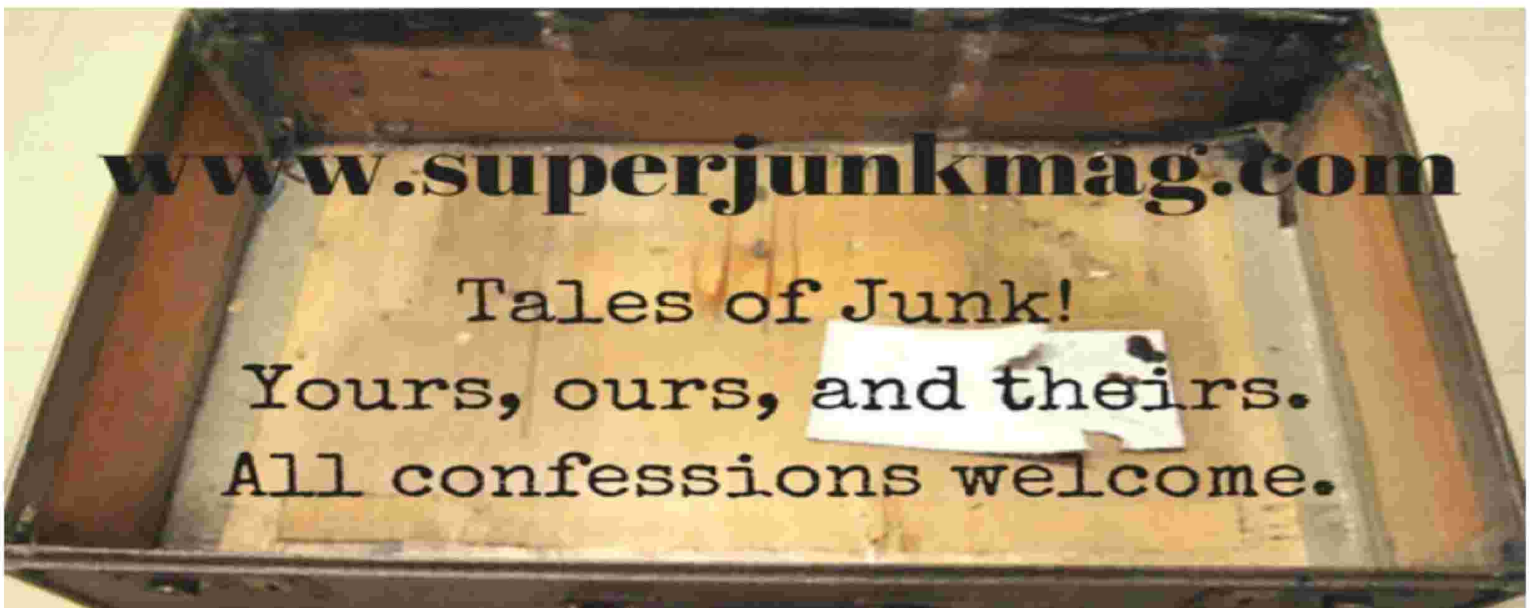
Walk* with a purpose.

Walk* in your own shoes.

Walk* in someone else's shoes.

*Feel free to substitute "walk" with "accept."

** Accepting the gifts of life is a journey that takes each person to many different places. Some low. Some high. Some mental, physical, and spiritual. Sometimes accepting a bad gift can be the best gift of all.



Story

Opposite Field Blast

By J.D. Schloss

Milt Floyd had been a Cincinnati Reds season ticket holder forever. He sat 10 rows behind the first base dugout, and always in the aisle seat; beginning at Crosley Field from 1946 until Riverfront Stadium opened in mid '70 and Great American Ballpark since '03. He loved keeping score, loved second (and first!) guessing the strategies of the managers, and called Willie Mays the greatest player he ever saw. He had no tolerance for “hotdog showboats” or beer drinkers and the Wave would send him into a rage. Jesus Christ...the Wave. The scorn he had for the pointless; albeit, harmless trend that swept ballparks all over the country in the 80's was a joy to watch. I'd tell him, “Milt, I'm worried your head's gonna just fall off one of these days from nodding it in such disapproval.”

Milt and I were in the army together. We met at boot camp in Mississippi. “Clyde,” he'd say, “Hitler and his gang of wolves must be stopped. It's our duty.” He was a model of restraint, where I was impulsive. He didn't drink or smoke, and in battle, he did what it took to protect his buddies.

Not long after VJ Day, I returned to the family cattle ranch in Whiteright, Texas, and Milt to Cincinnati. We'd talk on the phone weekly, and visit one another every couple every couple of years. In Cincinnati, we'd golf, take in a few ballgames, go to the gym and spar. In Texas, he'd come down and help out on the ranch. Milt was strong as a Brahma bull, not an ounce of fat on his six-foot frame. He'd tell me, “Clyde, for all the hell we went through, the war never changed you. I admire that.” He was a straight shooter and though we differed on just about everything politically, we had a mutual respect borne out of serving together. He was a titan of business and commanded respect. The smartest man in the room, he didn't tolerate nonsense. He'd never married and never talked about any relationships. He was a rigid man and I felt he purposefully deprived himself of having a good time. He'd run five miles each morning and be at his desk, running the show at his families meatpacking concern by 630 AM. He walked 18 holes every Saturday and Sunday morning. He owned a palatial home on the Ohio River and devoted a few hours every night in his home gym to lifting weights and pummeling the heavy bag.

Sometime around '82, I believe, I'd come to visit. I went to the concession stand and got him his lemonade and a tub of popcorn and some nachos and a beer for myself. Coming from Texas, I was leery of Riverfront Stadium Tex-Mex, but figured I'd give them a try. The look on Milt's face was one of absolute disgust. “What in the hell are those things and how in the hell do you eat them?” I just laughed—Milt being Milt. I began eating and he came, in his own quiet way, unhinged. “Get a goddamned fork, Clyde. You're embarrassing yourself eating with your hands like some goddamned animal. He was a master of his emotions, and when angry, trying to keep his composure, he would speak in a hissing whisper through gritted teeth. It could be at times frightening and at others amusing. There was no use trying to explain to him that eating crisp tortilla chips with a plastic fork was about as effective as pouring gas on a fire. “You're a smart man, Clyde,” he continued, “Why is it you don't know those jalapenos will rot your stomach?”

Two days later, we were at Seder and I'm watching Milt put heaping mounds of horseradish root on matzo. I say to him, "Milt, that stuff is a thousand times hotter than those limp ballpark jalapenos, and here you are wolfing it down." He gives me this sheepish grin, takes another bite, dabs the corners of his mouth with a napkin, and says, "Incongruous..." That's Milt Floyd, for you. No hypocrite, but damn inscrutable at times.

We were both old. Milt's vision had been deteriorating and finally went in 2005 and he'd lost total hearing in '06. And so we exchanged a few letters. I'd write to him about my begrudging acceptance of Father Time keestering me. He had a live-in nurse and I guessed some kind of Braille tablet-thingsy that he used to communicate with her and dictate correspondence. His letters were upbeat, mostly about baseball, but he'd write about players and teams that never existed, games that never happened. Who in the hell was "Lightning Armed Lefty, Arlester Clackamas?" Callow Rookie, 3D Fagan; Diminutive Fireballer, Chubby Chase; Lord of the Leather, Wizard Stiltzkin..." These were ballplayers I'd never heard of. I just assumed Milt was losing it. After all, we were older than dirt.

Milt was one tough son of a bitch. I'd been fighting getting older for years and I couldn't imagine him cooped up at home, unable to see, listen to his beloved Red Legs, communicate with anyone, or exercise. I at least had my wife, my children, the grand kids, great grand kids, and nominal ownership of the ranch. His mind seemed to be going south and I wondered what in the hell was keeping him alive.

The letter I received two days ago read:

Clyde,

Come quick. Take in a ballgame with me.

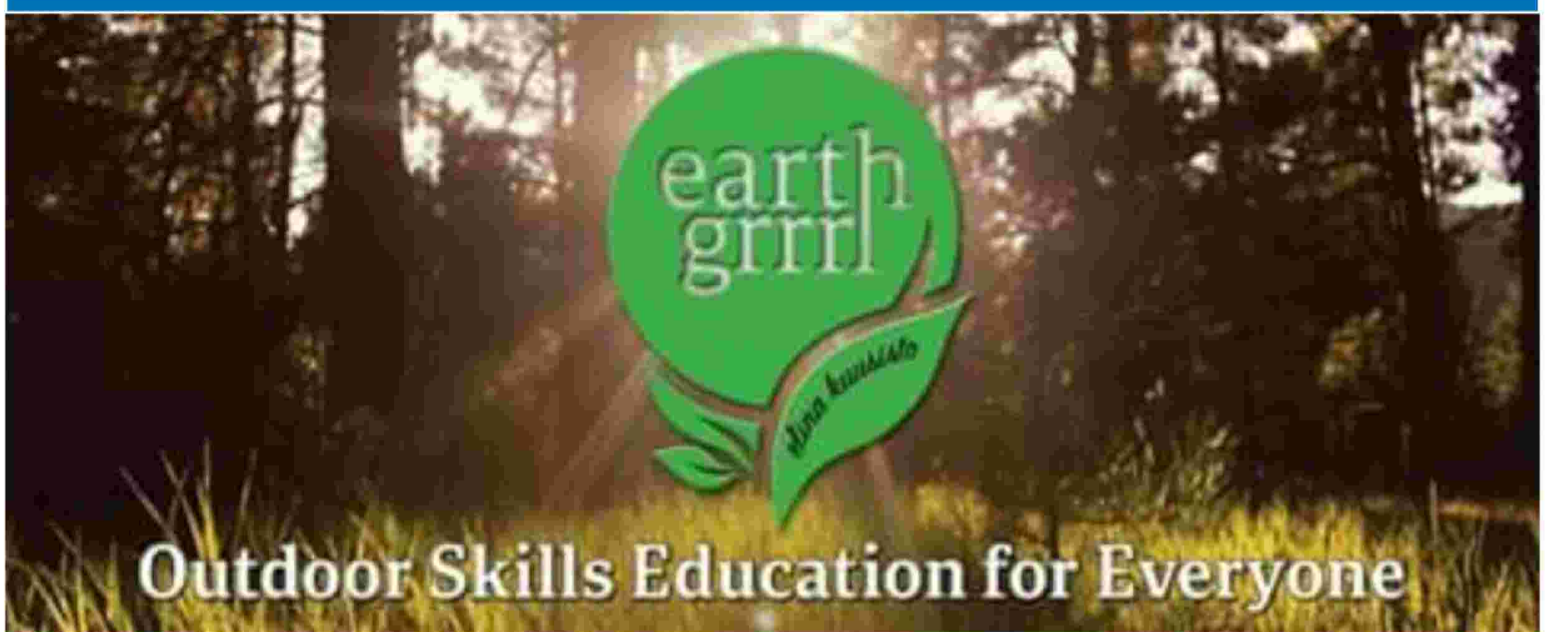
Fondly,
Milt Floyd.

We hadn't visited one another for years and I wasn't too thrilled about seeing him in this condition. I couldn't imagine him being able to attend a game, but there was no way I could turn down a request from my best friend.

As the taxi made it's way down the long driveway to Milt's house, I said a quick prayer and a sense of calm came over me. My anger about getting old and my fears around seeing Milt on his last legs dissipated. I was truly excited to be in the company of this once-great man.

I was greeted at the door by a young woman who introduced herself as, "Nelly, Mr. Floyd's nurse and official scorekeeper." She instructed me to leave my bag at the door and said, "Follow me to the broadcast booth."

Scorekeeper? Broadcast booth? What in the hell was going on, I wondered. She led me to what I'd previously known as Milt's study--a beautifully appointed, cavernous room with a wall of windows overlooking the river towards



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Kentucky. “As you know, he can’t see or hear you. He...”

She opened the door to the study and was interrupted by my friend bellowing from behind his great oak desk, “Clyde! Clyde! Welcome! I can smell the ranch on you from a mile away.” He was beaming. “Come in, come in. Come give me a hug.” I hardly recognized him. Physically he was still Milt, maybe a bit shriveled from age since last time I’d seen him. But asking for a hug? He was a handshake man. Ear to ear grin? He usually wore a scowl. Wearing pale blue seersucker pajamas in the middle of the day? This was not the stoic Milt Floyd I’d known.

“So you’ve met Nelly. Great girl. Great girl. Scorekeeper extraordinaire and archivist of the Stuffs and Things Professional Baseball Organization. Easy on the eyes, ain’t she?”

I went around the desk and hugged him. He held me tight. It was unsettling, in a good way though, to embrace my friend.

“Sit down. Make yourself comfortable, Clyde. No, actually wait. Take a stroll around the room and check it out. Nelly, please give him the lowdown,” he was ebullient and I wondered if he was hopped up on prescription medication. Knowing he couldn’t hear me, I asked Nelly what meds my friend used.

“He’s high on life, Sir. Just a multi-vitamin and love of baseball...and of course overjoyed that you’re here. He talks about you every day,” she replied. “Let me give you a quick tour of the Commissioner’s Office. That’s what Mr. Floyd calls it. It’s really to make my job easier,” she explained as she led me over to the east wall of the room. The wall had been re-done, painted a chalkboard surface. As you see, the Columbus Blackouts lead the Central Division of the Green Book League; have a four game winning streak, and are holding a narrow one game lead over the Covington Venus Loungers. Over here are the Red Book League standings and here we have the offensive leaderboard. Pitching leaders

are here.” The chalkboard extended the length of the wall and was covered with standings, statistics, and schedules. “These are the league records. They go back ten seasons,” she said as she opened then shut a few file cabinet drawers bursting with documents. “As I’m sure you’ve figured out, we won’t be going down to the ballpark. The games are in his head.”

“In his head? Has he completely lost his mind?” I demanded of her.

“On the contrary, Clyde. He’s the sanest, happiest man I know,” she replied. “He’s sharp as can be. He has every name and number on these walls and in those cabinets committed to memory. I’ve been with him for going on six years now and each day is just a joy since he’s started calling these ballgames.”

I was dumbfounded. Solemn Milton James Floyd had done a complete 180. He’d never indulged any sort of fantasy life. I’d never taken him for creative and here I was in the midst of fairyland. Trying to reconcile this discrepancy caused my head to spin. I needed a drink.

“It’s just about game time,” Milt shouted, interrupting the grinding of the gears of my mind. “The Little Dukes are hosting the Gin Soaks.”

“I best get that popcorn poppin’,” Nelly said as she made her way over to a commercial sized popcorn machine. “We don’t play ball without it. You go make yourself comfortable. I’ll bring you a beer.”

“Good afternoon, lovely fans of our National Pastime. I’m Milt Floyd bringing you all the action from Slaughterhouse Yards. Gorgeous ballpark here on the banks of the Ohio, and home of your first place Little Dukes. We’ve got a real treat for you today as my lifelong brother in arms, the erstwhile Clyde Beddoe joins me in the booth. Clyde’s a Big Bend Beasts season ticketholder, but don’t hold that against him, folks. It’s a real scorcher in Porkopolis today. 97 degrees in the shade. This heat takes one back to boot camp down in Mississippi, eh, Clyde?”

I was enthralled. Milt was bursting with joy, and his energy was contagious. What the hell, I figured. I decided to go along for the ride. I drained the beer Nelly handed me in one pull and asked for another. “Sure thing, honey. I’ll be busy keeping the book once we get started, so feel free to just get up and get your own. Frosted mugs are in the freezer below the bar. When the game’s over, I’ll set you up with the Screen Braille Communicator so you two can talk.”

“Shamu Abrahamm breaches, as he does every fifth day to toe the rubber for Porkopolis. Abraham is 9-4 on the year, with a nifty 2.12 ERA. He loves the humidity, Clyde. At 349 pounds, Shamu breaks a sweat brushing his teeth. Casper Disaster leads things off for the Gin Soaks. San Francisco comes into play today in a dead heat with the Winnemucca Mattress Backs atop the Green Book Western Division. They wear their road grays with orange piping and black lettering. Boilerman Fanucci is behind the plate calling balls and strikes and the rest of the umpiring crew features Bramble Patch at first, TJ Sucklings at second, and Horse Eggs Evans at third. First pitch fastball from Abraham is

taken for a strike and we're under way, folks. Shamu delivers, pitch swung on and drilled into the right-field corner. Little Dukes right fielder, Curly Hoofs chases it down and it's a leadoff double. That'll bring catcher, Francisco Cassanova, to the And the switch-hitting Casanova goes down swinging. Veteran slugger Maverick Jackson steps into the box. Jackson clubbed 47 round-trippers a year ago. His game-winning moonshot off Scat closer, Bombo La Paz, two days ago in Sarasota, was the 300th circuit blast of his career. Here's the pitch, and Jackson takes a tremendous cut and comes up empty.

"Maverick Jackson...Maverick Jackson," I wondered aloud. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"Those were Mr. Floyd's dogs when he was a child. Maverick and Jackson," Nelly said. "You've got a good memory, Mr. Beddoe."

"Not according to my wife," I said.

"Pitch swung on and belted, deep center field, Shefangs is on his horse, to the track, to the wall, leaps and...he brought it back...he brought it back! Oh, mercy me! Rickey Shefangs robs Jackson. What a play! The runner tags and scores and it's 1-0. Peril Stokely will be the two out batter. Peril returns to the lineup after serving a ten game suspension for breaking curfew. Let's just say it's most fitting that he plays for the Gin Soaks."

"I've been to at least fifty games with Milt, probably more. There's no bigger fan, but this...this is something else. It's like he was born to be a broadcaster, Nelly."

"We are in the home half of the first and shortstop Livingston Buzz will lead things off for the hometown Little Dukes." After a batter reached, Milt continued, "Leadoff man is on and that'll bring left fielder Beauregard Mushy to the plate. Mushy loves the sour mashy, folks. When he's not on the diamond, he can usually be found wrestling a bottle of Senators Club Bourbon. He told me not too long ago, 'Milt, you know, when I'm sober, the ball looks like a baseball, but when I got a few in me, it looks like a big old medicine ball. There goes Buzz from 1st, hit and run, and Mushy drills a low line drive into left. That'll put runners on the corners for second baseman, Kid Gallivanting.'"

"Base hit, Kid!" I was surprised to hear myself shout. Fully caught up in the Little Dukes rally, cheering for mythical ballplayers. This was not at all what I expected.

These names, the folksy patois! Where in the hell was he coming up with this stuff? Milt was the straightest arrow I'd ever known. Milt never swore around women and hearing him speculating and commenting on the sex lives of these ballplayers was shocking. This complete transformation—from reticence to effusiveness—made no sense. The joy in his face and bearing though reminded me of my kids running through the sprinkler years ago. Not a care in the world.

"Here's cleanup hitter Viceroy Creature. Hitless over the last fortnight; his typically fearsome 36 inch 35 ounce cudgel rendered impotent. 'I might as well take a goddamned mint flavored toothpick to the plate these days,' Creature told me

during batting practice this morning. The pitcher, Sir Francis, working from the full windup, delivers and it's 4-1! Grand slam, that ball was massacred! A laser that's still traveling for Creature, folks."

"Slump busting at it's finest," exclaimed Nelly. I had jumped out of my seat and crossed the room to give her a high five. "It's a beautiful thing," she continued.

"I need to talk to him, but I don't want to interrupt his flow," I told her. She reached over and typed a quick message on the Braille contraption.

"That monolithic blast by Viceroy Creature has opened up the heavens. It's pouring down rain here at Slaughterhouse Yards and the Gin Soaks Nine race toward the visiting dugout in search of dry purchase. Grounds crew heads out to cover the field and we're in a rain delay, folks."

"Come on over and sit here, right next to Mr. Floyd. It works just like any old keyboard," Nelly instructed me. "I'll go shuck us some Coromandels and leave you two alone."

"Oysters! Milt! What in the hell has gotten into you?" I typed. He'd given me countless lectures through the years about how eating them was, "like playing Russian Roulette, goddamnit! You're dancing with death, Clyde."

"Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks. They're delicious with a good stout," he said, with that patented sheepish grin of his. "I'm so glad you're here, my friend. Nelly has been a lifesaver, a life changer. She's turned me on to all sorts of delights."

"Thank you for summoning the rain, Milt."

"Thank Viceroy Creature, Clyde."

We spent the next three hours talking—me typing, him talking—gushing really about old times. It was no different than his calling the ballgame. The man radiated joy. He told me how losing both his sight and his hearing was the greatest gift he'd ever received. He shared how he had no regrets about the way he'd approached the world the first 81 years of his life and how, "With the help of Nelly, I decided it was time to try on something new."

"I love you, Milt," I typed.

"I love you too, Clyde. The grounds crew has removed the tarp and we're moments away from resuming play, folks. Rain or shine, it's always a beautiful day for a ballgame, folks."



J.D. Schloss, originally from all many points east of the St. Croix Valley, and a former resident of it, currently resides, works and writes from Taos, New Mexico.

Low Adventures: Trekking the Superior Hiking Trail

Part 10: Craig With Two Tims On Section 13's Wonder Fall Trip By Tim Krenz

After eight trips of hiking and camping the Superior Hiking Trail, I lessened my many anxieties for the adventures. I could never truly overcome the unexpected, like walking into a bear's path. But by taking careful heed of my preparations, I reduced the many concerns with heart failure, getting lost on a one-path trail, and other such like nightmares of forest meandering. Naturally, I gained more self-assurance as we took more trips. On the same order, I grew less tolerant of the gear I felt it once so necessary to carry. Our first few trips years back, I looked like an old, bigger, less-refined Elmer Fudd—of Warner Bros. cartoon fame—“goin' prospectin'” with a ton of crap on my back and gear hanging off me—gear that I never could use in such short trips.

My personal challenge became to enjoy myself more with less comforts of a hotel room in the woods. Craig always brought less gear, and consequently less weight, than I. Craig had the luxury of lighter packs, I always thought, because he could use what I brought with me. As a case in point, I always insisted on carrying a rather useful medical kit—for minor things, yes, but still important for anything beneath a vicious and rabid bite from a sick squirrel or falling from a cliff. Craig, though, only brought generic band aids and aspirin. Craig probably had it right, but I would always feel more comfortable with having things for emergencies (beyond blisters, cuts, etc.). Yet, as we always said: The best use of a medical kit? Well, to never have need of one. In truth, I needed a lesser load, as I learned hard-to-carry lessons. As Craig would often remind me, if I wanted to carry it, I could bring it along. At least with my pocket-sized book of *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, we could avoid and dispense with the same droll and repetitious conversations Craig and I often had on the Superior Hiking Trail.

For the trip we would take October 2005, I reduced some gear by making trades. A folding pan and plate combination and a metal cup with folding handle (both military surplus) replaced my German cook kit. I would also use lighter silverware and a plastic cup. I would bring one green insulated coat and a polar fleece sweater, with only a change of underclothes and three pairs of extra socks. (About socks on the trail, I learned to love to change into dry, clean socks mid-day and at bed time). Finally, I had reduced my shaving and medical kits for this trip into one, fist-sized little pouch.

For food, I decided to leave behind the multi-spice shaker, taking only a mixed bag of salt and pepper. Having learned more lessons from the last trip, I only included a few small, kid-sized bags of M&M candies, not a 2-plus pound bag. With Mom's homemade venison jerky, tangy and spicy, and smokey-flavored, and breakfast bars and instant oatmeal, I rounded out my food bag with my contribution for the big dinner the one-night we would actually camp on the trail. For that meal, I pre-cooked potatoes and carrots and wrapped them in metal foil. Craig had planned a special feast for that night, which turned into feastful proportions, both in the amount and the kind of meal.



Besides the other normal gear—tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, my trusty and ever-more useless dull hatchet, etc.—I debated bringing only loose-leaf graph paper and leaving behind my orange forestry journal, the one Craig gave me on our second trip. In the end, I decided that since I wanted to carry it I would bring that trusty orange journal.

A few weeks prior to our trip, I ran into an old friend at the coffee shop. This friend, 8 years my junior and also named Tim, had spent several years living and traveling outside of the Valley. In a conversation one day, Tim2, as we came to call him, mentioned that he had hiked the Superior Hiking Trail since moving back from the deep south. It took him under three weeks to cover the 270-odd miles of trails, both main routes and spurs. As a hard charging and youthful outdoors person, Tim2 had done more in less than 20 days what had taken Craig and I three years only about 1/3. Without doubt, after clearing it with Craig, post facto, I invited Tim2 to join us on our trip to Section 13.

To begin the trip, I got a ride to meet Craig in North Branch, Minnesota, at 6:40 AM. After a loaded breakfast of gut-sticking fast food, Craig saved several unused packs of butter from his pancakes. We left North Branch and drove together in Craig's little green truck to the County Road 6 parking lot, located in some type of open air gravel pit, arriving shortly before 10 AM, northward of Two Harbors, MN. We needed to shuttle the truck to the County Rd 7 lot, and since we did not know if Tim2 would definitely appear, we asked some of the other people sleeping in their trucks if they could help us. Then Tim2 showed up! Never again would I doubt him. After Craig and he shuttled the green truck to the end of the trail, the three of us—Craig, Tim2, and I—headed north by foot on Section 13, of the Superior Hiking Trail.

The terrain those first two miles went steeply. At the dome of rock on a cliffed hill, above the forest, we saw yet another of the innumerable expansive views of leafless trees in the autumn forest, a sight now so superfluous in these low adventures, that we would note only the more extraordinary in our trekking. While on the gray, curved slab of rock, we passed a class of University of Wisconsin-River Falls students. Located about 40 miles south of my hometown, that university had sent this group on a field trip. Under the guidance of a professor, cooking water on a stove and wearing a red kerchief, they could not have picked a nicer, cleaner, sunnier spot to eat their lunch. We chatted, briefly, with the safari professor-guide, and walked farther along until the cliff descended into a narrow valley.

On this trip, I learned a new hiking trick from Tim2. He taught me a lock step, an easier way for someone with bad knees to climb up steep paths. Tim2 instructed me in all of five seconds. First I needed to take a full step with the left (or right) leg. When I bring the other leg forward, I lock the knee of the first leg and stand upright. Locking the joint saved on the wearying tearing of my abused knees. Easily done, I could see the advantage. Although Tim2 carried a similar backpack to mine, with everything he needed to enjoy a night in the forest, he far outpaced me. Walking up one hill, I commented to Tim2—the whipper snapper—how old, out of shape guys like Craig and I needed extra time to climb the steep, bending trails, around the tangled and exposed “tripping tree roots,” protruding out of black, hard-packed dirt. Tim2 replied, “Give yourselves credit! You're out here doing it!” Well, that comment I took as intended, indeed as a confidence-building compliment. It made me feel somehow better, especially after three hiking couples, with 3 dogs, lapped our pace 3 times after the 3 of us—Craig, Tim2 and I—took 3 rest breaks.

After five and a half miles of hiking into the woods with full packs, we made our camp at Leskinen Creek just before 3 PM. And throughout the day, Tim2 seemed more amenable to Craig's stories than the stranger with the telescoping weenie roaster on our last trip (see “Low Adventures, Part 9,” *NormalcyMag*, V. 3, N. 1, Feb. 2019). And throughout the day, following our hot noodle soup for lunch, and the three small packs of M&Ms I distributed to each of us, we talked about camping.

We hung our bear ropes for the food bags over a cable for that purpose a little down the hill, toward the creek from where we drew our water. Craig and I used just a single rope over the metal cable slung and tightened between two high trees. Tim2, ingeniously, used 2 ropes. One, a ratted and old rope with a metal, oval ring with an open and close lock, he threw over the cable and the ring came down to

the ground. He put his newer, better rope through the oval ring and drew the ratted rope up with it. When Tim2 would hang his food, it worked like a rudimentary pulley system. It saved the wear and tear on the new rope, at least. Tim2 also gave me another tip, one that I try now to follow on all my camping trips. No matter what—toothpaste, brush, etc., or pots and pans—anything with a smell would attract critters. To prevent that, everything—not just food—goes up the bear rope for the night! While precautionary, it lessens any chance of mortifying trouble.

Our water resolution of dispensing with the dirty, contaminated, useless, and difficult pump filters worked just fine for Craig and I. In drawing water from the small, narrow stream, partly gummed with scraps of broken leaves and twigs, Craig and I added purification tabs to our bottles. At least the tabs killed the microbes and bacteria. The coffee we boiled and drank that afternoon and the next morning tasted just fine. I became okay over all our trips with spitting out a couple twigs and leaves along with the coffee grounds, once or twice with every pot we drank

We built a fire with the abundant wood from the thick forest that surrounded and overhung our very small clearing. In the campsite of black, rich, nutrient earth, the trail managers had built a nice rock fireplace and assembled some newer furniture, roughly made of hewn logs. By 5:30 PM, we needed that fire, and more fire as night progressed. The fall air brought the fallen temperatures, when the evening's darkness grew in rapid increments as the sun arced itself below the hill's crest. It gets awfully dark awfully fast in the forest. When we had the coals in the corner of the fire ring a glowing red hot, we prepared our camping celebration feast in this wooded tabernacle amid a tall temple trees.

Although we could have brought freeze-dried foods on these trips, they never would satisfy the elaborate meals a memorable camping trip demanded. As my part of the meal, I contributed the potatoes and carrots, pre-cooked, and wrapped in aluminum foil to warm on the fire coals. Tim2 added a spicy dish from a bag of dry ingredients, from which he dumped the red beans and rice into a small camping pot of hot water boiled over the flames. While he praised the virtues of one-pot meals, eminently practical in backpacking—less gear, less preparation, and less mess and cleanup—he opened a bag of precooked chicken chunks, and he added them to his metal pot. The pot's nearness to the fire cooked the whole into a steamy stew.

For the main course on this trip, Craig added his breakfast butter to the opened sleeve of wrapped aluminum foil. He closed it and placed it on the coals, with which we covered the top of the long, thick wrapping. Turning the foil with a stick, carefully so as not to rip the foil, we could hear the butter bubbling inside the tube. When he thought it done and well, Craig removed the foil of food from the fire ring. He opened it and it steamed. I could smell it, the onions, the lemons—the butter. There sat a light pink and white piece of feast, flaking and glazed, melting my mind.

Craig had made us a fire-baked, true Alaska salmon, one he caught on a trip to that same state not more than two months previous. Perfectly thawed by the walk, the large slab of fish cooked only crisped on the edges where the fire lapped the foil. The almost-fresh salmon, salted and peppered, tasted not at all fishy, and it had a smokey-flavor that only a good wood fire and hot baking coals can add to food. After we devoured all the food, Tim2 busted out of his food bag a king-sized Snickers bar. He used his pocket knife to cut it into three equal portions. After we ate that candied dessert, we realized that we ate like some gluttonous kings of the North Shore forest.

Near the fire ring, the trail workers had cut up the old camp furniture made of logs, like the log furniture on which we sat. Tim2 threw a big chunk of tree trunk from that pile on to the fire. Then, we realized a moment later how tired we all felt. Oopps! We needed to stick it out until the fire burned down, for safety reasons, before any of us could go to bed. We added smaller pieces of wood for the next three hours to keep that log-trunk burning fiercely and quickly. In telling stories back and forth, Tim2 told how one night camping alone on this Superior Hiking Trail, as he slept in his tent, a moose had wandered into his camp. He said it scared the crap out of him. It would scare me, too! It reminded me of when we camped at Palisade Creek and Mary and I had heard something, something big, scraping a tree for a half hour. That scared me, too!

At 9:30 PM, Tim2 went to his one-man tent and Craig and I turned into my gray and green Eureka two-person tent. I slept well after a little reading of Thucydides. I had my empty back pack under my body, adding insulation to my foam pad from the cold, hard earth. I got chilly twice, waking at 4:00 AM, until I woke again at 6:00 AM to smoke a cigarette. Overall, I felt fully rested when we all rose an hour later. That morning, I cut my finger with my pocket-knife, trying to slice off some kindling into a "flower petal" to use to start a fire. Damn! (Idiot me!). I got to use my first aid kit.

Once we made hot coffee, some instant oatmeal, and after we ate cold, crumbling breakfast bars, we packed up camp at 10:00 AM. We had a two and a half mile hike to Craig's car at County Rd 7. We walked through the same hilly, leafless terrain of a forest going into hibernation. At the parking lot, Craig found a green water bottle. (He has it to this day). Other than that, the low adventure ended with me riding with Tim2 back to Wisconsin, and having good conversation and a trouble-free ride back to home.

On all these trips to the Superior Hiking Trail, I learned new things—about camping, about friends, about strangers, and about myself most of all. On this trip, having Tim2 with Craig and I made for an extra-memorable and fun experience. I knew Craig well-enough by now, after ten years of camping together and other experiences. I understood how solid a friendship Craig and I had made, and still have, although he and his family now live 1800 miles away. Although I had not seen Tim2 since he moved away after he had graduated from high school, I knew him from the coffee shop, and I learned more about him on the trip to Section 13. And, indeed since then, I have made a great friendship with him over the years. Of myself, like all good spirits having a human experience, I have learned many things. The camping helped me distinguish, quicker and faster, the types of questions I devised while looking at the fire in the ring. I knew then, and I know now, that having lived these low adventures thus far, I had more miles to trek. What else could the low adventures bring me, in the art of living a good life while making good friends?



Vidi

A Gift in the Journey

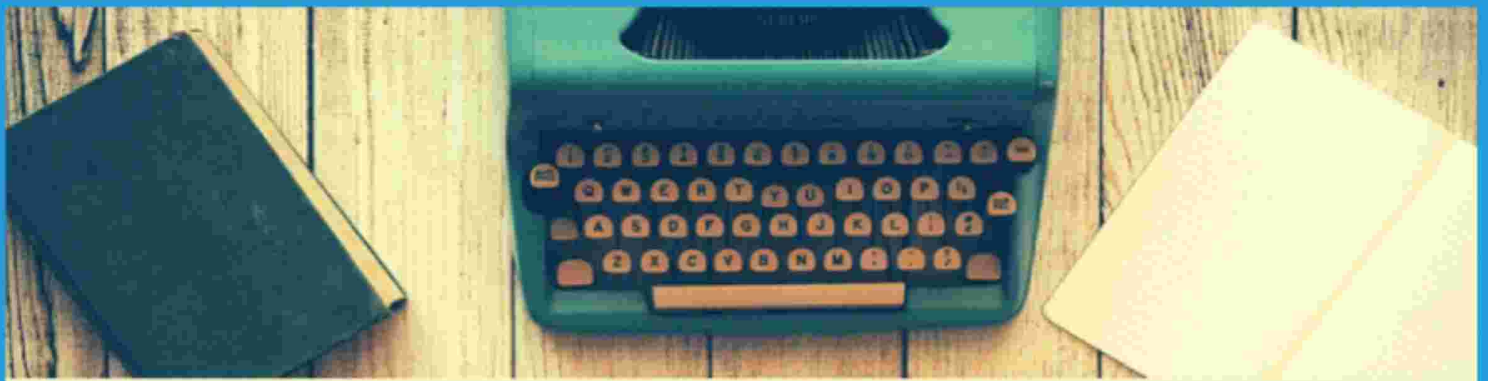
Photos By Roger Panek



(Clockwise from far left). Chickadee had no home, sitting lonely on the shelf. The guys got together in their Toys of the Round Table. Frog Lo called his friend, Turtle Shoes, who called his cousin, Turtle Do on the Rabbit's phone. Turtle Do said to his best friend, Mickey Mouse, "Hey, can you help the guys find a home for Chickadee?" Mickey then called his poetry teacher, Oh Captain, My Captain. Oh Captain, My Captain said, "Bring thee and Chickadee to Me." He gave Chickadee to his wife, darling Babushka. Now, Chickadee has a loving home. ---A Story by Pi Kielty (p.h.)

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Roger Panek, a native of the St. Croix Valley, lives in and photographs from rural Luck, WI.



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